

Accountant (GS-510) Competency Model

[Note: This competency model framework allows for the development of a customized GS-0510 Accountant competency model using competencies suggested by the CFO Council.]

This document, *Core Competencies for Accountants*, identifies the accountant's KSAs, learning objectives, and developmental activities to meet today's changing environment. In addition to the technical core competencies, leadership competencies must also be considered. Leadership competencies are the personal and professional attributes that are critical to successful performance in many occupations. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued the *Leadership Effectiveness Framework (LEF)*. *LEF* defines 27 competencies that are important for effective performance at all leadership levels within the Federal Government.

Introduction

Identifying and understanding necessary core competencies are more important than ever before. Financial managers need highly qualified personnel who are well equipped to contribute to the missions of agencies. The CFO financial management community has recognized that there is imbalance between the skills and knowledge of the existing work force and the new requirements for consolidated financial statements; accountability reports; performance reporting; integrated financial management systems; commercial transaction processing services; etc.

The impetus for developing core competencies began in 1994 following a government-wide training symposium, sponsored by the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Council and the Joint Financial Management Improvement Program (JFMIP), to share information and identify priorities for human resource development. The priorities identified at the symposium included developing core competencies for financial management personnel, which would assist CFOs and managers in obtaining and retaining a highly qualified workforce with knowledge, and know-how. The first effort resulted in the *Framework for Core Competencies for Financial Management Personnel in the Federal Government* published in 1995. The Framework Document discusses the rationale, in broader terms, for developing core competencies. In part, this Framework document states the time has come for the Government to ensure that there is uniformity and consistency, to the extent feasible, in human resource development.

An interagency working group began the core-competencies project by identifying knowledge, skills and abilities for each position. Therefore, this document embodies these core competencies. The competencies are divided into seven categories:

- ◆ General Accounting
- ◆ Federal Accounting

- ◆ Basic Government Accounting/Operations
- ◆ Planning, Budgeting and Accountability/Business Practices
- ◆ General Management
- ◆ Information Technology
- ◆ General/Leadership skills

These are the seven general areas that every accountant should seek to develop. Because employees in these positions cover such a broad range of functions, it is likely that managers and employees will need to tailor the competencies to fully reflect what accountants in their organizations should have knowledge of and be able to perform. Included among these competencies may be accounting principles, auditing and relevant experience. It is recognized that some organizations may have unique requirements for human resource development. This document focuses more on general applicability, rather than unique needs.

This document indicates the appropriateness of the core competencies for three distinct levels, showing the advancement of knowledge.

Level 1 Entry level; typically consisting of introductory fundamental, basic, and routine activities; normally 1 to 3 years of experience as an accountant.

Level 2 Journeyman level; typically consisting of activities which address specifics, proficiency, applications, and local missions, normally a minimum of 4 years of experience as an accountant.

Level 3 Senior level; normally a team leader or first level supervisor, typically consisting of activities which address complexity, expertise, program impact, or extended operations involving multiple organizations.

The KSAs are listed in the first column of the following matrix. In the center of the matrix, the column entitled "Learning Objectives" describes what developmental activities should be provided to the accountant in order to achieve the competencies. Examples of the types of developmental activities to consider are listed in the final column. These activities include on-the-job training and formal training courses.

How to Use This Document

This document should be used as a guide for making a multitude of workforce decisions from considering what type of staff to hire, to planning and executing staff development programs. It should stimulate discussion between management and staff regarding training choices or rotational assignments and also assist management to communicate its expectations to staff to help them grow personally and professionally. This guide should be used in developing an individual development plan by the individual and manager.

Employees should be aware that they have a responsibility for building these core competencies in order to prepare themselves for effectively executing their duties. However, this document is merely a guide. While providing advice to help accountants become more effective, it does not guarantee promotion or qualification for specific positions.

	CORE COMPETENCIES Knowledge of, Ability to Use, or Skill in Using)	Levels			LEARNING OBJECTIVES	DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES
		1	2	3		
A. General Accounting						
1	Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and concepts	X	X	X	Obtain general understanding of traditional accounting practices, operations, and procedures	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Various accounting Other Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conferences/Seminars• Current professional literature• Publish articles• Presentations• Serve on panels and committees• Complete certification program (e.g. CPA, CMA, CIA, CGFM)
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge on the different methods of accounting including accrual, obligation, and cost methods	
		X	X	X	Interpret and apply existing, new, or revised accounting principles and concepts to make accounting reports more accurate and more closely comply with requirements	
B. Federal Accounting						
2	Federal accounting concepts and standards, including cost accounting	X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of Federal accounting principles and concepts	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic Federal Accounting Principles• Federal Management Training Seminars• Appropriations Law• U. S. Standard General Ledger (SGL)• Federal accounting standards including FASAB and other standard-setting bodies• Accrual World• Government accounting principles• Managerial cost accounting• JFMIP annual conferences
	Basic accounting concepts and principles including agency budget procedures and system(s) relationship with financial management	X	X	X	Acquire general understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal accounting concepts and appropriation process• Federal financial/accounting standards	
		X	X	X	Accurately record documents for reporting purposes (e.g., budget reports,	

	CORE COMPETENCIES Knowledge of, Ability to Use, or Skill in Using)	Levels			LEARNING OBJECTIVES	DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES
		1	2	3		
					agency reports, financial reports)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OMB Circulars and Bulletins • Treasury's annual government financial management conference • Professional association meetings • <u>Sources of Funding</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriations • Reimbursable work • Revolving funds • Non-appropriated fund activities • Trust funds • Gifts/donations • Cooperative Work • Deposit funds • Special funds
			X	X	Understand the principles and possible application of cost accounting in the Federal government	
			X	X	Assess impacts on agency/organization policies, systems and procedures and provide substantive analysis and recommendations	
			X	X	Analyze Federal legislation and policies and provide management with substantive analysis and recommendations	
					Understand accounting terminology and application.	
		X	X	X	Appropriately apply accounting principles and procedures to work products	
		X	X	X	Understand the functions of agency financial systems	
		X	X	X	Efficiently retrieve, use and analyze information pertinent to daily work	
						<p>Work Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze proposed federal legislation, policies, and/or guidance and develop appropriate implementation plans and changes to local policies and procedures • Review new/revised federal legislation, policies, and/or guidance and develop appropriate implementation plans and changes to local policies and procedures • Detail to office coordinating agency cost accounting • Projects involving analysis of cost and/or performance data

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		1	2	3		
3	Federal Financial Statements and Reports	X	X	X	Acquire general understanding of Federal financial reporting	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Unlocking key reportsRevenue Standard/Form and Content StatementsFundamentals of Federal Financial StatementsAudited financial statementsAccountability reportsCentral reports such as 133, 2108, etc.SF 224: Statement of TransactionsContents and purposeImpact/connection to GAAP, FASAB, etc. Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prepare and/or analyze financial statements
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of the components of the agency/organization’s financial statement and financial reports	
		X	X	X	Identify the requirements of Federal financial statements and reports	
		X	X	X	Prepare and analyze reports	
			X	X	Draft narrative sections and prepare explanatory tables, graphs, and charts that report program performance, including financial statements, based on the requirements of the GPRA and other legislation for inclusion in Department/Agency wide Accountability Reports to the President, the Congress and the taxpayers. (Prepare and/or analyze narratives, footnotes, and performance measures for financial statements and/or financial reports.)	
C. Basic Government Accounting/Operations						
4	Missions, functions, and organizational structure of the agency and its offices	X	X	X	Understand the organization’s mission in context of its legislative mandates and Administration priorities for the agency	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Internal orientation briefings

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	Acquire knowledge of the agency/organization's structure, mission, functions, and major components Comprehend how the agency is organized to achieve its mission Create a shared vision of the organization; promotes wide ownership; champions organizational change	Work Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and discuss with supervisor agency authorizing legislation and agency mission statements Rotational assignments, including finance office
5	Mission and functions of central agencies such as OMB, Treasury, GSA and OPM play in government operations	X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of the roles and missions of the central agencies and other service providers and how they interface with your agency X X Comprehend the relationships of central agencies to agency operations X X Maximize support for agency mission by working with central agencies	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal government operations Public administration Work Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details to central agencies Projects working on functions requiring interaction with central agency staff
6	Agency accounting policies and procedures	X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of agency/organization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting policies and procedures Agency financial reporting 	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial policy Standard accounting codes and entries

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	Develop, implement, maintain, and document accounting procedures to meet changing requirements	Work Experience: Demonstrate and apply proficiency with accounting policies and procedures in daily work
7	Public laws, executive orders, OMB circulars, bulletins, agency directives, Comptroller General decisions and court opinions governing the agency's management processes	X	X	X	Comprehend and incorporate legislative and administrative requirements into all work products	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriations law • Budget formulation Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details to planning, budget, and finance offices.
8	Audits and formal reviews		X	X	Acquire experience in dealing with auditors, including preparation for audits, working with auditors, commenting on audit reports, and developing corrective action plan	Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic financial audits • Auditing standards • GAO reports • Compliance reviews • FMFIA • Internal controls reviews • Financial statement audit reviews
9	Management Controls (Internal Controls)	X	X	X	Acquire a general understanding of the importance of a strong system of management controls	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic accounting course which includes discussion of the issues of management control • Management controls Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate and apply proficiency with
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge in management control concepts and principles	

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	Acquire an understanding of how management controls reasonably ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial integrity is maintained for the recording of transactions and the recording of results Transactions are executed in accordance with management's general or specific authorization Resources are safeguarded against waste, loss, and misuse 	management control concepts in daily work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual assurance memorandum Management control reviews Review of management controls reporting of external audits System development System process review
			X	X	Identify and implement appropriate general controls and application controls	
			X	X	Establish management controls	
			X	X	Assess, improve and correct management controls	
			X	X	Apply checks and balances to transactions and procedures to ensure data integrity and regulatory compliance	
			X	X	Monitor and evaluate systems of management controls with appropriate documentation, identify deficiencies, and assist in correcting deficiencies	
					Develop, implement, maintain, and	

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	document management control policies and procedures	
D. Planning, Budgeting, and Accountability/Business Practices						
10	Planning and Evaluating	X	X	X	Plans and coordinates with others	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service • Creative decision making • Leadership • GPRA • Business process re-engineering • Project management
			X	X	Understanding of the major components and the requirements of the agency's strategic plan	
				X	Establishes policies, guidelines, plans, and priorities	
				X	Identifies required resources	
				X	Monitors progress and evaluates outcomes	
				X	Improves organizational efficiency and effectiveness	
			X	X	Acquire knowledge and experience in project management	
11	Specific agency/organization business practices	X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of principles and processes of business practices	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer security awareness

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	Knowledge of business practices as they relate to the financial system(s). Apply principles and processes of business practices to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement policies and procedures • Property management • Travel • Budget concepts • Cost control • Management controls • Fiscal procedures • Performance measurements • Customer service • Quality control • Ethics/Financial Stewardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service • Industry training courses Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotational assignments are strongly encouraged • Business process reengineering initiatives • Participation in industry interest group meetings
12	Basic budgeting and program concepts and principles including agency budget procedures and relationship with financial management system(s)	X	X	X	Understand budget terminology and application	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal budget process • Budget formulation • Budget presentation • Budget execution Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotational assignments to planning, budgeting, finance, and program organizations are strongly encouraged
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of agency's general budget principles, operations, and procedures	
			X	X	Understand the functions of agency financial systems	
			X	X	Appropriately apply budget principles	

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		1	2	3		
			X	X	and procedures to work products Efficiently retrieve, use and analyze information pertinent to daily work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate in agency budget planning
			X	X	Comply with the agency/organization's budget formulation and execution requirements and procedures including documentation, processes, and controls	
				X	Effectively interact with budget personnel by providing financial information to facilitate budget formulation and execution	
13	Structure of appropriations and other funds which support the agency's mission.	X	X	X	Comprehend the statutory and regulatory requirements associated with budget execution	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal budget process Budget planning and formulation Appropriations law Cash management Government accounting Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting manager in budget execution
			X	X	Develop an understanding of internal agency fund control practices	
			X	X	Develop and apply funds control and internal policies that ensure administrative control of funds	
14	Agency's budget execution operations and processes and how obligations and expenditures are incurred for assigned	X	X	X	Gain an understanding of how obligations and expenses are recorded	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal accounting courses Program regulations and operations

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		1	2	3		
	program areas	X	X	X	Record obligations and expenses in the financial system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget execution Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details to program offices Joint projects with program office staff
15	Current accounting issues and state-of-the-art developments in resources management field; areas outside of the budget which have financial importance to the programs of the agency			X	Ability to explain importance and impact of specific accounting issues to high-level officials	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant graduate-level courses Continuing education in the accounting field Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacting with peers and customers Participating in and attendance at professional seminars and symposia
E. General Management						
16	Basic techniques of financial management, economic analysis, management controls, auditing, and program evaluation	X	X	X	Comprehend the fundamentals of financial management Convey fundamentals of internal management controls and control techniques Apply range of bench marking, analysis and program evaluation techniques Explain principles of Federal auditing and their application to program management	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting controls Business administration Analytical techniques Process re-engineering Program evaluation Fundamentals of Federal procurement Contract management Grants management Economics Federal auditing principles

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		1	2	3		
18	Generally accepted management principles and practices	X	X	X	Understand accepted management principles and practices, organizational development concepts and principles	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College management courses • Conferences and workshops Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process reengineering team • Human resource projects • Organizational reviews
19	Organizational development concepts and organizational analysis techniques, performance effectiveness concepts, productivity measurement and measurements system		X	X	Understand and apply principles and applications of organizational assessment, management intervention and change management, management indicators, effectiveness and efficiency measures, and measurement system design techniques	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational development • Change management • Benchmarking • Program analysis • Performance management Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotating to Human Resource Office • Participating on performance measure development teams
20	Federal procurement, contract management and grants management		X	X	Identify and interpret Federal policies regarding procurement, contract management, cooperative agreements and grants	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal procurement • Grants • Contract management • Project officers training • Loan processes • Credit reform

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		1	2	3		
						Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing statement of work for contract Rotational assignments
21	Productivity improvement systems and business Reengineering processes		X	X	Understand processes for reviewing and Reengineering business practices. Interpret and apply knowledge and design, acquisition process, procedures, terminology and documents, and implementation of productivity improvement systems	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity improvement Benchmarking Process reengineering Workflow analysis Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reengineering team Rotation to planning office
F. Information Technology						
22	Basic personal computer applications; Automated data processing concepts, tools, systems and Internet capability	X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of automated data processing concepts and tools	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic computer use Software applications used by agency (i.e., spreadsheets, graphics, presentation software) Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate learned skills into day-to-day work assignments, as applicable Use software such as word processing, spreadsheets, and database programs
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of basic communications hardware and software	
		X	X	X	Use automated accounting and financial systems to record and classify financial transactions	

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		1	2	3		
		X	X	X	Apply computer application skills to present financial data using the appropriate format (i.e., spreadsheet, narrative, graphic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare charts and graphs using automated software • Attend/participate in meetings, workshops, and briefings concerning information technology (e.g., use of telecommunications, teleconferencing, LAN, Internet, e-mail)
			X	X	Integrate new applications/software into work activities	
				X	Develop requirements for automated accounting and financial systems to meet changing requirements and to improve processes	
23	Federal Financial Management System (FFMS); automated data systems development, documentation, and data administration policies, concepts, tools, and standards	X	X	X	General understanding of the fundamentals of agencies/organization's FFMS	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Systems Design and Implementation Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the FFMS in daily work activities (Inputs, Outputs, and Controls) • Rotational assignments that include systems development
		X	X	X	Acquire knowledge of automated data systems development, documentation, and data administration policies, concepts, tools, and standards	
			X	X	Operational applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data structure • Query reports • Problem Solving • Integration with other systems • Integration with other applications 	

	CORE COMPETENCIES Knowledge of, Ability to Use, or Skill in Using)	Levels			LEARNING OBJECTIVES	DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES
		1	2	3		
				X	Develop requirements for automated data systems development, documentation, and data administration policies, concepts, tools, and standards	
				X	Advanced applications; Exposure to the development or modification of financial systems including determining FFMS requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• User requirements• Testing• Training• System reconciliation• System design	
24	Financial System’s Functionalities <u>NOTE:</u> Refer to <i>Core Competencies for Financial System Analysts in the Federal Government</i> for more detailed information relating to this competency	X	X	X	General understanding of the general functionality of the financial systems and their interfaces with other systems	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Systems Design and Implementation Work Experiences: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rotational assignments
				X	Thorough knowledge of the organization’s various financial systems’ functionalities	
G. General/Leadership Skills						
25	Written communication	X	X	X	Communicates effectively in writing	Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective Writing• “Plain English” writing
			X	X	Prepare routine memoranda and reports	

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		1	2	3		
				X X X X X	Reviews and critiques others' writing Conduct and/or participate in effective meetings Prepare and present analyses, reports and budget justifications to officials Prepare and/or review documentation in support of reports Prepare and review complex reports and justifications for senior management	Work experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate learned skills into day-to-day work assignments

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		1	2	3		
26	Oral communication	X	X	X	<p>Listens to others</p> <p>Makes clear and effective oral presentations to individuals and groups</p> <p>Provide effective communication with all organizational levels to keep lines of communication open to minimize conflict</p> <p>Give presentations including problems statements, recommendations, and project status</p> <p>Prepare and present analyses, reports and budget justifications to officials</p> <p>Conduct and/or participate in effective meetings</p> <p>Give complex/high-visibility presentations to senior management (conferences, major meetings, seminars, etc.)</p>	<p>Courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic communications skills • Briefing and presentation techniques • Effective briefing • Facilitation skills <p>Work experience: Incorporate learned skills into day-to-day work assignments</p>
27	Other Leadership skills	X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability • Conflict management • Continual learning 	<p><u>NOTE:</u> Refer to OPM's web page - http://www.opm.gov - for leadership competencies, definitions, and courses</p>

	CORE COMPETENCIES Knowledge of, Ability to Use, or Skill in Using)	Levels			LEARNING OBJECTIVES	DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES
		1	2	3		
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creativity and innovation • Cultural awareness • Customer service • Decisiveness • Entrepreneurship • External awareness • Financial management • Flexibility • Human resources management • Influencing/negotiating • Integrity/honesty • Interpersonal skills • Partnering • Political savvy • Problem solving • Resilience • Service motivation • Strategic thinking • Team building • Technical credibility • Technology management • Vision 	